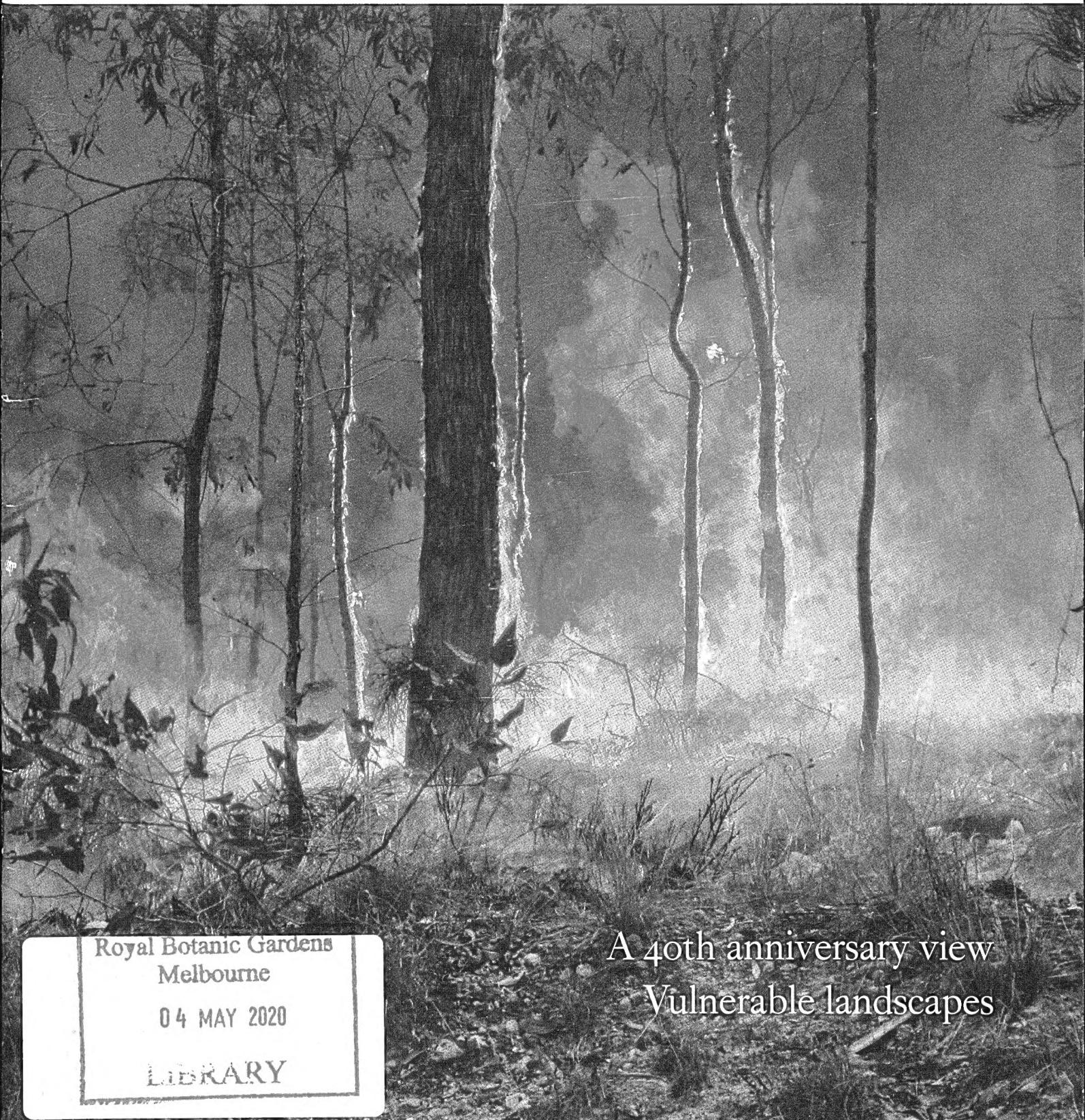


Australian Garden HISTORY

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Royal Botanic Gardens
Melbourne

04 MAY 2020

LIBRARY

A 40th anniversary view
Vulnerable landscapes

Editorial

Bernadette Hince



Our gardening future?
(‘Where is
the water?’)
photo Bernadette Hince

Going co-ed

It is a real pleasure to let you know that two formidably talented new editors, both of them members of AGHS, will start their co-editorship as you read this issue – writer and editor Penelope Curtin of Bendigo (Victoria) and historian and writer/editor Francesca Beddie of Bundanoon (NSW). Penelope and Francesca have worked together before, and are keen to meet the challenges of *Australian Garden History*. We look forward to this exciting partnership. Welcome, Penelope and Francesca!

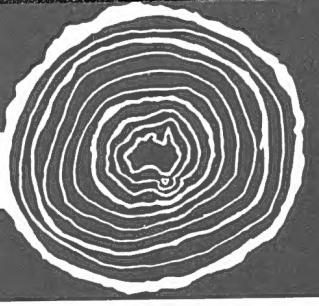
All of us involved with the Society’s management are delighted that Mariana Rollgejser is continuing as the exceptional designer of *Australian Garden History*. Anyone who knows Mariana knows that her commitment and talent play a vital role in the high quality of every single issue. We can’t thank you enough, Mariana.

What a summer. 2020 has brought us some daunting consequences of a changing climate. We have had catastrophic fires, hazardous air, deep drought and unprecedented heat – and in some places, damaging hail and floods. As a society concerned with growth, gardens, history and landscape, we need to be taking action for a future in a radically changing world. Special thanks to Jane Lennon AM for her thoughtful lead article on this subject.

Your journal

In February 2020 AGHS co-Chairs Stuart Read and Bronwyn Blake sent around to members images of some of the earliest newsletters and journal issues. Since the beginning of the Australian Garden History Society 40 years ago, its achievements have been strongly tied to the publication of *Australian Garden History* (and its predecessor titles). Speaking personally, it has been a privilege to edit this journal for the past five years. This is my final issue as editor. The Society’s talented and supportive – and voluntary – national committee, and the many excellent authors writing during that five years have made it deeply satisfying for me. Heartfelt thanks to all contributors, to AGHS, and to you, the readers, for your continuing lively interest in *Australian Garden History*.

Cover Fire at Captain Creek, central Queensland, 2010.
photographer unspecified, Wikimedia Commons



The view from here

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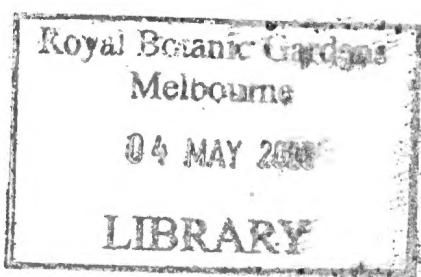
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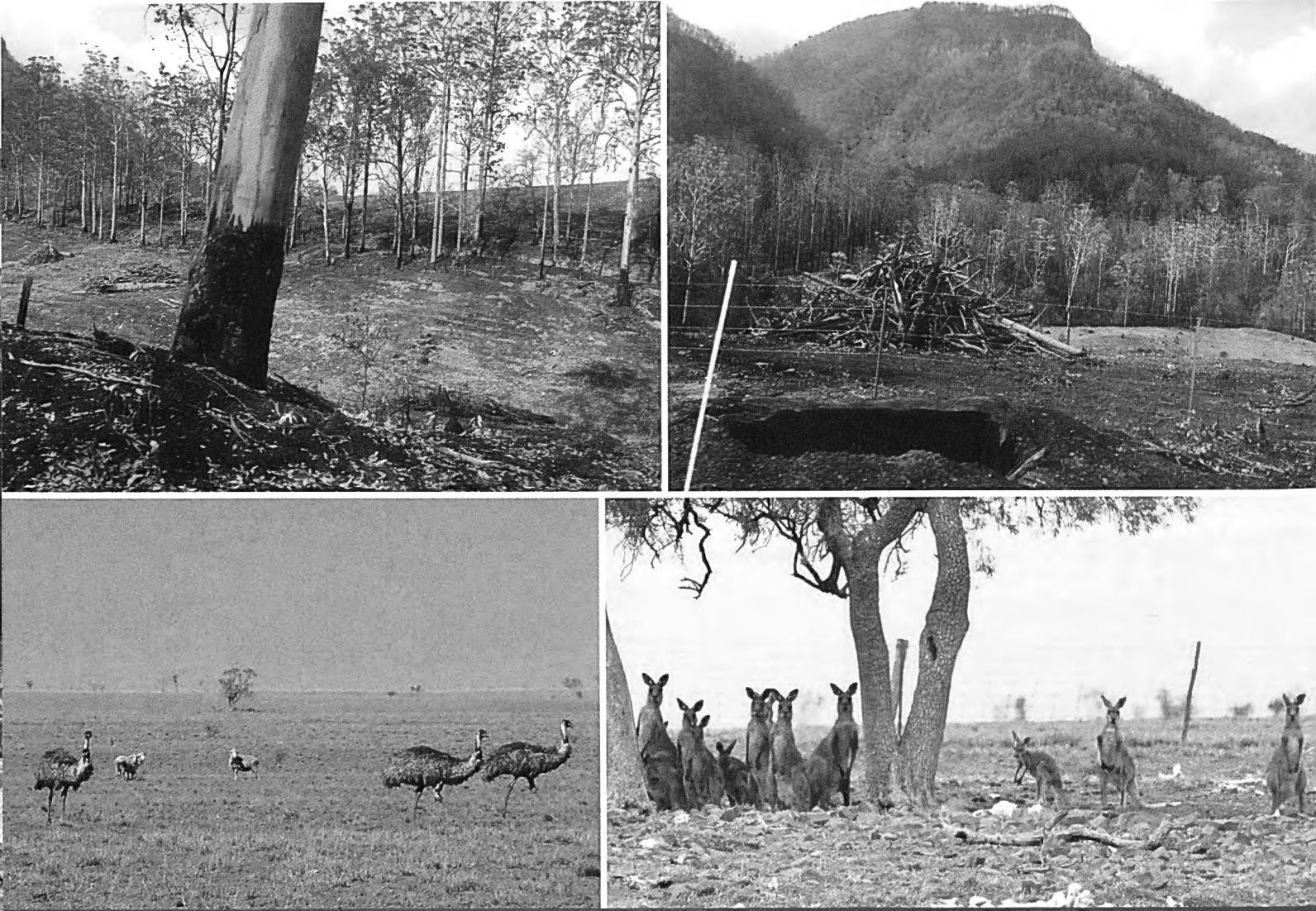
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On p 4 Jane Lennon looks at the history and possible future of AGHS. Eucalyptus remnant, Australian National University campus 2018. photo Jane Lennon



Jane L Lennon

Whither historic gardens in this new era of climate change?

Above Mt Lindesay highway, southern Queensland, with only the tallest trees remaining.
photos Jane Lennon

Below Drought on the rangelands south of Tambo, Queensland.
photos Steve O'Connor

Historic gardens had a lowly spot in Australian heritage awareness at the time of the publication of the *Report of the National Estate* in 1974, in which only some botanic gardens and urban parks were mentioned. The new Australian Heritage Commission was charged with compiling an inventory of the National Estate and funded a series of regional surveys of historic gardens in 1978–79. These surveys built on work already undertaken by the Victorian branch of the National Trust where Peter Watts was the field officer for the historic buildings committee which was

then inspecting a suite of historic Western District properties and their gardens. The Australian Garden History Society was the outcome of the pioneering survey work.

David Yencken, the first chairman of the Australian Heritage Commission and advocate and funder for studies of historic gardens, concluded his lecture at the inaugural AGHS conference in 1980 by referring to an ancient garden tradition with relevance he thought to Australia. He described the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician (also translated as the 'Garden of the Humble Administrator') in Suzhou, China. Wang Chin Tsz began the garden and 'built it as a memorial to my failure in politics'

and Yencken thought that there could be a glorious continuation of this tradition if each of our many failed politicians would retire and build a great garden to commemorate his failures.

But what of the historic gardens documented by the surveys?

In acknowledging the gardens already surveyed, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch said that it was vital to discover more before they disappeared and to record, collect, propagate and distribute those plants which are an essential part of old gardens. She said that the formation of the AGHS was 'a positive statement about recognising these gardens as an important element of our history and the National Estate'. The AGHS was primarily conceived as a body to conserve the heritage of gardens, not just garden history. (Dame Elisabeth Murdoch's and David Yencken's speeches can be found in full in Sue Ebury, ed (1980) *Proceedings of the First Garden History Conference*.)

Inevitably, we have lost some of those historic gardens which were so enthusiastically identified and recorded in the first decades. Howard Tanner's wonderful 1979 travelling exhibition, 'The Art of Gardening in Colonial Australia', made people aware of the hidden treasures of our historic gardens, and the statewide surveys added to this. Many places were classified as gardens – for food, for propagation and scientific purposes, arcadian landscapes, picturesque landscapes, Victorian-era gardens in the gardenesque style, hill stations and pastoral empires. How many of the gardens described by Tanner and Begg in their 1976 book *Great gardens of Australia* still exist, and in what condition?

Peter Watts (1983 p 112) noted that one of the great hidden treasures of Victoria is 'its rich

store of homestead gardens', the largest group of historic gardens to have survived in Victoria for a variety of reasons: they are not subject to development pressures like city gardens; farm labour and garden staff have been available; owners and their families also work in these gardens; and most importantly, continuity of ownership brought stability and reluctance to change. Is this still the condition for the 30 or so gardens Watts described in the country estates section of his reconnaissance? And what of the other gardens from this first flourish of surveys?

Gardens of national significance

The National Heritage list (a much smaller successor to the Register of the National Estate) only contains three historic gardens per se: Rippon Lea house and gardens, the Royal Exhibition Buildings and Carlton Gardens, and Eureka Stockade Gardens, Ballarat, although Woolmers, Brickendon and Old Government House at Parramatta have gardens within their designated areas. Surely there are more gardens of national significance. State heritage agencies have compiled registers and many gardens are listed. How often is there a condition survey of these gardens and, if so, what conservation action is taken as a result?

In 2006 the AGHS produced a report, *Visions and voices*, examining its work from 1980 to 2005. It detailed an impressive output from the voluntary efforts and monetary contributions of its members covering the Society's journal *Australian Garden History*, books (especially the *Oxford companion to Australian gardens*), conference proceedings, workshops and seminars, and a list of projects to conserve gardens. Working bees of local branch members have been a boon to conservation of many gardens and a source

Left Conservatory at Rippon Lea estate, Elsternwick, Victoria. photo life_student, Flickr

Right Avenue of Honour, Bacchus Marsh, Victoria, ca 1950. Gelatine silver postcard. photographer unspecified State Library of Victoria H99.155/21



of pleasure for the participants. Meetings, conferences and tours have been a great way of making new friends, maintaining old friendships and sharing the delights of the distinctive range of regional gardens. Conferences in places as far from each other as Albany, Maryborough, Albury and Wellington NZ have enabled access to unknown gardens and conservation projects.

Rural and remote areas often have gardens but these are not on the tour agendas and often they are the loving productions of owners who with some encouragement are often willing to share their endeavours. There have been no AGHS conferences in Alice Springs, Port Augusta, the Kimberley, Far North Queensland or central Queensland, yet this wide brown land has a rich biodiversity and a garden-making history.

Future directions?

A membership survey in 2005 strongly endorsed the advocacy role of the AGHS. How well has that been achieved? There have been some local campaigns, for example, saving key areas of Callan Park from sale by the NSW Government, stopping the freeway cutting through Royal Park Melbourne, protecting the Avenue of Honour at Bacchus Marsh from road widening and the King George V Avenue in Tamworth. Advocacy has usually concentrated on public places, and roadside conservation has been a continuing issue, which Edna Walling with her praise for Australian country roads would have been pleased with. However, with the recent catastrophic bushfires across so much of the Great Dividing Range and coastal eastern Australia, many beautiful remnant mature trees have been cleared away in the aftermath to make roads safe again.

Beyond the garden fence

While our major public and botanic gardens receive government and public support, our cultural landscapes in the wider countryside have not, often because they are not recognised as significant and are subject to owners' wishes and whims. The rural-urban fringe has expanded into once rich agricultural areas with their distinctive historical patterns as along the Hawkesbury River valley in NSW and the market garden belts around many towns. Relict cultural landscapes within larger national parks have been invaded by the bush. Our advocacy has been lacking in this wider sphere beyond the garden fence.

And now we are entering a new phase of drier, hotter climate with a major impact on gardens of all scales. What should be our response?

How do we adapt our historic gardens to cope with increasing days of high temperatures and lower rainfall in extreme events?

Action

At the branch and local level, we need members to assist in keeping historic gardens alive. They would need a list of historic gardens, willing owners and working bee members with the ability to undertake works.

We need a campaign to make sure mature trees are watered and public gardens are maintained during droughts as they provide refuge and solace to those who cannot keep their own gardens flourishing.

We should assess our most historic gardens to check their condition and apply different levels of care to ensure their continuation. This will require owner cooperation and should be delivered as caring assistance.

We should do more to encourage research in universities into the multidisciplinary aspects of historic gardens and continue the scholarly publication, *Studies in Australian Garden History*.

We should remember that historic gardens are part of our nation's heritage.

We need to capture the hearts and energies of a new generation so that politicians and managers will listen and support historic garden conservation. Just as we are learning to care for country, we need to remember that gardens are not only works of art and design, showing the ebb and flow of fashion and taste over the decades, but also repositories of rare old plants and evidence of our evolving attitudes to our climate and soils and how we live in Australia.

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Harry Saddler

Mudflat and saltmarsh

Australia is a coastal nation. Most of us live on or near the coast; the sea and the beach are deeply embedded in our national sense of self. If we don't live by the sea, we long to at least holiday by it. But for all our love of the coast, we idealise only very specific coastal landscapes: we dream of golden sandy beaches with rolling breakers, and deep harbours with the promise of the open ocean beyond. Few of us romanticise shallow coasts that alternate between dry and inundated. Few of us romanticise intertidal mudflats or saltmarsh. But mudflats and saltmarsh are some of the most beautiful, important – and vulnerable – of our coastal landscapes.

Every year, around September, hundreds of thousands of shorebirds in some three-dozen species arrive in Australia and disperse around the coast. They're looking for the mudflats and

the saltmarsh. The smallest of them, the stints, are not much bigger than sparrows; the largest, the eastern curlew, is about the size of a chicken. Whether big or small, though, every single one of these birds has completed one of the most extraordinary migrations in the animal kingdom: from their breeding grounds in Siberia, both adults and fledglings alike – the youngest only six weeks old – have flown for days on end for thousands of kilometres to get to our shores. When they start their migration they're plump with fat; when they finish they're gaunt – and starving.

They sate their hunger on the mudflats. Beneath the surface of the mud live innumerable clams, worms, crabs, molluses, and other invertebrates. Plenty of nutritious food for hungry birds, and migratory shorebirds aren't the only ones who exploit this abundant and rich resource. Yet when we look at mudflats, most of us see only – mud.

Mud

Mud has few positive connotations in the English language. Somebody's name can be mud;

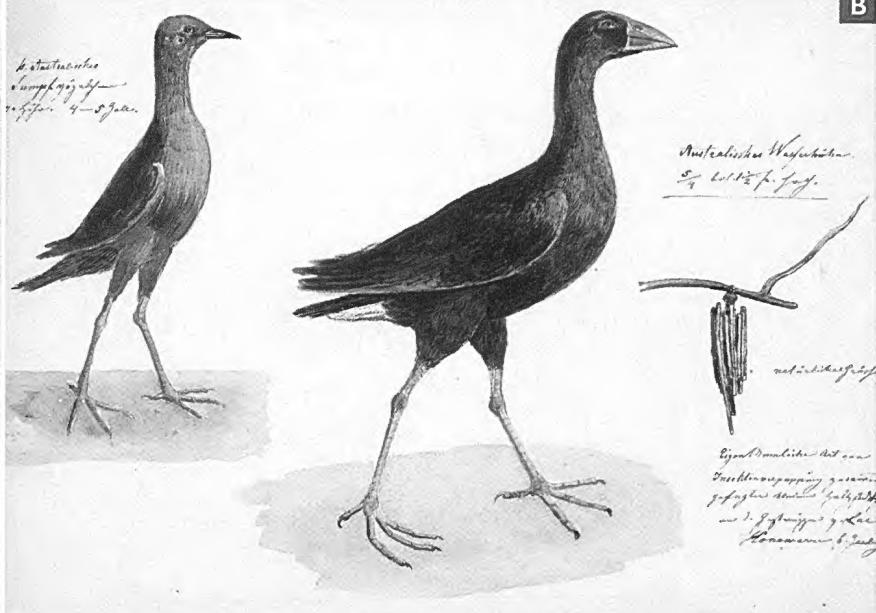
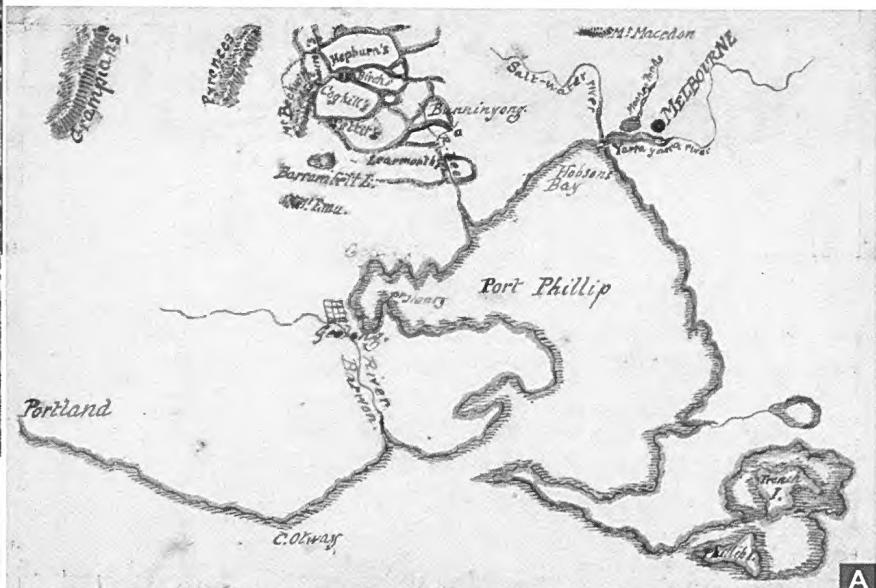
Intertidal mudflat at sunset and low tide.
all photographs
French Island,
Western Port, Victoria
Harry Saddler

somebody's reputation can be dragged through the mud; to complicate something unnecessarily is to muddy the waters. Mudflats are easy to exploit, because they're so little valued. Mudflats are often walled off, concreted over, drained of their life, converted into something more 'useful' like farms or factories. When we build on coastal habitats the word we use is 'reclaimed' – as if they had always been ours, and were just waiting for us to put them to use.

Behind an intertidal mudflat you'll often find saltmarsh – and this, too, is easily exploited, and industrialised. Around Melbourne alone salt was once harvested from the saltmarsh from French Island to Geelong, the natural shallows and ephemeral wetlands of the saltmarsh turned into wide evaporation pools, paths and canals cut through it. Yet many of the birds which feed on mudflats feed also on saltmarsh. And other species, too: in Victoria, most notably, saltmarsh

is the winter home of the critically endangered orange-bellied parrot. And like intertidal mudflats, saltmarsh is a surprisingly beautiful landscape.

If you spend time on either mudflats or saltmarsh you'll find that the flat landscape – that same flatness which makes them so easy to build upon – pushes your attention to the immediate, such that tiny variations take on monumental scope. In this way even the sites of former industry can be picturesque. On saltmarsh where salt was once harvested the large evaporation ponds can now be filled with stilts and avocets, long-legged and fine-billed wading birds that fly nomadically around Australia following rain and gather sometimes in flocks of thousands. The shallow channels left by the saltworks are home to juvenile fish that swim just below the surface in such great numbers that when they move as one, each animal smaller and more slender than a finger, the sound is like that of an oar pulled through the water.



Saltmarsh is as colourful as a rug: khaki where sedges grow in low bushes; deep green where saltbush forms fuzzy mats or bright vivid green where algae spreads upon the water; purple and bright red in the samphire. On a hot sunny day when the water has evaporated salt glitters in the exposed mud like stars. When the saltmarsh is inundated the water slips between the vegetation, glittery and silver under clouds or satin-blue in the sun. On an overcast day when the setting sun never seems to drop below the cloud-cover but just keeps lighting it from behind with more and more intensity the reflective quality of the water takes control, and everything shines softly like hammered lead.

Mudflats may not be quite as dramatic as saltmarsh can be, but they also have their beauty. They can strike awe by their sheer scale: in the Yellow Sea between China and Korea, through which all those migrating shorebirds funnel on



their way to and from Australia, the intertidal mudflats can be metres deep and extend for kilometres offshore. I vividly recall walking on a mudflat in South Korea a few years ago, when the tide was out: on high ground the mud was firm, and walking across it was brisk and easy – exposed to the sun and air the mud had become more solid than I'd expected it to be. Salt from the retreated sea dusted the surface with white that from a distance looked like lichen.

In the small gullies and runs formed by drainage streams from the surrounding fields the mud was paler, slick and soft. The low areas were marked by piles of tiny pebbles of mud circled around pinhole burrows dug by the tiny animals that live beneath the surface, while the high areas contained larger holes made by larger animals. The gloss of moisture in the lows – only a few centimetres lower than the highest points of the mudflat – caught the low-angled late afternoon sun, causing parts of the mud to shine like silver. In the first blush of dusk the mud assumed a soft magenta hue. If you walked on any of the mudflats around Australia – carefully so as not to disturb the foraging birds – you might find the same beautiful sights.

Vital, but under threat

But in South Korea, as in many other countries around the world – including Australia – much of that beauty has been destroyed. Despite the fact that mudflats and saltmarsh (and other natural coastal landscapes such as mangroves) are known to reduce the damaging effects of coastal flooding and storm surges, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change notes that around the world, nearly 50% of coastal wetlands have been lost over the last 100 years, whether by development or by sea-level rise due to anthropogenic climate change.

In Australia development proposals currently threaten saltmarsh and mudflats from Toondah Harbour in southern Moreton Bay, Queensland, to Western Port in Victoria. There is some hope for these often disregarded landscapes: just last year a section of the Yellow Sea coast in China was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. But unless we learn to fall in love with mud, and with marsh, these beautiful, significant, and unfairly maligned landscapes may soon be gone.

Harry Saddler is a writer based in Melbourne. His work has appeared in the *Lifted Brow*, *Meanjin*, and the *Guardian*. His book *The eastern curlew: the extraordinary life of a migratory bird* was published by Affirm Press in 2018.

A Ink and watercolour map of the Port Phillip district by Charles Norton (1826–72), ca 1844 – ca 1863. French and Phillip islands are in the southeastern bay [Western Port].

State Library of Victoria H88.21/96

B Eugene von Guérard (1811–1901) watercolour of waterhen and swamphen, 1854.

State Library of Victoria H3802

C Saltmarsh after summer rain, French Island.

D A high section of intertidal mudflat at low tide.

E Flooded saltmarsh.



Clare Gleeson

Wetherstons' gold

Wetherstons' daffodils among the ruins of the malthouse, Black Horse Brewery, September 2019.

photo Clare Gleeson

In 1861 gold was discovered at Gabriel's Gully in Central Otago, New Zealand, and shortly after at nearby Wetherstons. Gold still shimmers at Wetherstons but it is on the hillside, not in the riverbeds. Every spring millions of daffodils naturalised from thousands of bulbs planted over 100 years ago cover the slopes.

During the gold rush Wetherstons was a bustling goldfields town with shops, banks, hotels, a school, gambling dens, billiard parlours and a brewery. The brewery opened in 1866 and was purchased by miners Ben Hart and James Simpson in 1884. Under their ownership the Black Horse became Otago's most successful provincial brewery.

The Black Horse Brewery daffodils

Brewery co-owner Ben Hart had been a prize-winning horticulturalist in Tasmania before moving to New Zealand in 1862. In 1895 he began planting narcissi bulbs around his home and the Black Horse premises with the help of brewery workers. The site is ideal for daffodils; natural springs provide water in winter and spring, it has good drainage and frosts, and the north-facing hillside provides the bulbs with a summer baking.

Fifty varieties of bulbs were sourced from several places, including the Netherlands, with prices as high as £100 per bulb. The daffodils, together with snowflakes and primroses, were planted mainly for naturalising.

In 1911 Ben's son Henry calculated there were approximately a million bulbs planted on the hills and in the garden he and his father had. By 1924 it was estimated that there were over 2 million bulbs around the brewery. The narcissi were planted over three fields totalling 10 hectares, with different varieties in each. In the lower fields it is still possible to see remains of the rows they were planted in. The Wetherstons daffodils are closely related to the wild daffodils, particularly the trumpets and the poets, and today there are also a lot of wild hybrids unique to the site.

Hybridisation

The Hart family were narcissi devotees. Ben, his sons Henry and Alfred and other members of the family grew, hybridised and showed daffodils in horticultural society competitions. In 1902 when Peter Barr the 'daffodil king' travelled to New Zealand, he visited the site. Recognition of the Hart family's contribution to the narcissi genus came in the *RHS Daffodil Yearbook for 1914* which contained 'a short historical sketch of their connection with the daffodil cult', a photograph of the daffodils growing on the hillside of the brewery and another of Ben, Henry and Henry's daughter Zita, also a daffodil grower. The entry referred to Ben Hart as one of the 'daffodil fathers' of New Zealand.

The principal hybridiser was Henry, who in 1910 estimated he had around 2000 seedlings, the result of eight years' work. Henry registered four varieties with the Royal Horticultural Society in London. These still appear on that institution's international daffodil register and classified list: 'Ben Hart' and 'Mrs B Hart', named for his parents; 'Margaret'; and 'Lady Fenwick' named after the wife of Sir George Fenwick, a keen narcissi grower who served as President of the Dunedin Horticultural Society. At the Society's spring show in 1921 'Lady Fenwick' was described in the *Otago Daily Times* as 'the loveliest thing in the show ... an immense long trumpet Leedsii, with a sweet apricot tinge well down the cup'. Keen to encourage all to participate in bulb growing, in 1915 Henry donated a Daffodil Trophy to the Dunedin Horticultural Society for competition for amateur narcissi growers.

Visiting the daffodils

The Harts were generous with their golden crop and encouraged others to visit the brewery and see the daffodils for themselves. The first railway

A REAL SPRING TREAT!

DAFFODIL DAY on SUNDAY, 10th OCTOBER, 1937

A Special Cheap Day Excursion will be run to LAWRENCE—where there are Daffodils by the thousands.

Take advantage of this Safe, Comfortable, and Cheap Excursion and Enjoy the Unique and Beautiful Sight of Nature's Gift.

Only limited accommodation will be available on the Excursion Trains so... **RESERVE EARLY**

AND! NOT FORGETTING THE OLD FAVOURITE---DUNEDIN

An Observation Tour through Anderson's Bay and round the Peninsula

Bus leaves Town Hall at 2.15 p.m.—2½ hours trip—Fare 5/-, including Afternoon Tea.

Transit's Band plays at Botanical Garden

or, an Observation Tour to Whare Flat

Bus leaves Town Hall at 2.15 p.m.—2½ hours trip—Fare 5/-, including Afternoon Tea.

First Battalion Band plays at St. Clair

THE FIRST BATTALION BAND will accompany the excursion and render selections of popular music. (By permission of the O.C.)

If you want a good day with your friends.

FOR PARTICULARS OF TRAIN TIMES, STOPS, LIAFAP FARES, ETC. PLEASE TURN OVER.

Top Daffodil Day excursion flyer, 1937. Archives New Zealand DAFV 9094 D455/248/3

Middle Young Helpers League, Lawrence, picking daffodils to sell in aid of Dr Barnardo's homes, ca 1917. photographer unknown. Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago

Bottom 'Seedling beds of daffodils in Mr Hart's garden at Wetherstones' [sic], *Otago Witness*, 24 October 1917, p 33. Guy photograph. Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago





Wetherstons' daffodils around the Hart house, September 2019.

photo Clare Gleeson

daytrip took place in 1912 when 250 people joined the Tuapeka Horticultural Society's excursion from Dunedin to Lawrence, the closest station to Wetherstons.

One can only imagine the excitement at Dunedin railway station on the 10th of October 1913 when 1000 school children and 500 adults boarded two special trains of 13 cars each bound for Lawrence. On arrival they formed a procession, and led by the Albany Street School fife and drum band, marched firstly to the school for morning tea and then to the brewery at Wetherstons to see the daffodil-covered fields. Afterwards the local horticultural society provided tea for the visitors before they boarded the trains and returned to Dunedin. This extraordinary excursion had been suggested by the president of the Dunedin Horticultural Society and taken up and inaugurated under the auspices of the Otago Education Board. It was named 'Daffodil Day' by its sponsor, Ben Hart.

Many thousands of blooms were donated by the Harts over a number of years to various causes. In 1916 the Otago Women's Association organised a 'Daffodil Day' with daffodils from Lawrence to be sold in aid of the children's fund which provided materials for school children to make into articles

of comfort for the soldiers. The bulk of the flowers came from the hillside at Wetherstons where 10,000 blooms were picked. The Head Masters' Association arranged a procession of school children from the Octagon and photographs published in the *Otago Witness* show hundreds of school girls dressed in white and boys in dark suits marching past a crowd holding daffodils.

The next year Henry donated 30,000 blooms for display in the Early Settlers' Hall and for sale to raise funds for the Barnardo Homes. The *Otago Daily Times* reported that the flowers had been picked 'carefully and methodically' by the Lawrence Young Helpers' League who had been 'trained' by Henry Darton, First Assistant at Lawrence School, a friend of Henry's and also a keen horticulturalist.

Daffodil Day became linked with the Plunket Society in 1921 with the announcement that thousands of Lawrence daffodils would be sold in aid of the Karitane-Harris Hospital and Plunket Society in Dunedin. Over 31,000 narcissi picked by the Lawrence Young Helpers' League were sent to Dunedin for sale the next day. The flowers were placed in large clothes baskets and then on to lorries to take them to the train station with the Young Helpers clambering on too for the fun of the ride.



The fame of the daffodils grew and every spring organised and independent excursions brought hundreds to see them. A brass band frequently accompanied the railway excursions, entertaining visitors on the platform while waiting for the train to depart or welcoming them to Lawrence with jaunty airs.

Not every day tripper was content just to admire the daffodils. In 1928 the *Otago Daily Times* reported that many 'in defiance of large and plainly lettered notices requesting them not to pick the blooms, helped themselves liberally' but 'each one, on arrival at the foot of the hill, was quickly deprived of his or her spoils and courteously thanked by the owner for assisting him to pick them'. A similar occurrence in 1937, when day trippers on excursion from Dunedin not only picked the daffodils but rolled down the daffodil-covered slopes, led to Henry Hart deciding not to open the grounds in future, although he later relented and they were open again in 1941 when they were patrolled by members of the Lawrence Progress League.

Journeying to see the daffodils was popular until the 1950s but then fell from favour. The abandoned brewery descended into ruins and the fields became overgrown although every spring

the daffodils could still be seen valiantly poking their heads through the gorse.

Wetherstons' daffodils today

In 2008 a charitable trust was formed to preserve and develop the site. This initiative successfully reopened Wetherstons to the public for several years and led to the ruins of the Black Horse Brewery being listed as a Historic Place Category One with Heritage New Zealand. After the trust lost momentum, it was reformed in 2016 with a new board and support and help from the people of Lawrence.

Reopened in 2017, the Wetherstons daffodils are once again accessible for all to see. The fields are still in the ownership of the Hart family, who generously allow the public access, and volunteers open the fields for three days a week for six weeks during spring. Little evidence can be seen today of the settlement that was Wetherstons but the gold of the Wetherstons daffodils continues to shine.

Dr Clare Gleeson is a Wellington-based historian and gardener. She is a member of a group establishing a heritage garden in the grounds of a Victorian farm house at Glenside, near Wellington.

Wetherstons' daffodils on the hillside, with flowering gorse, September 2019.

photo Clare Gleeson





Lynne Walker

Trevenna

Trevenna,
photographed
in 1904.
photographer unknown,
UNE Archives

The seasonal conditions experienced across Australia in the summer of 2019–20 make it seem inappropriate to be featuring green and thriving gardens. Unprecedented in our lifetime and possibly in our history, drought, extreme heat and bushfires are wreaking havoc on our environment. Whether they are due to global warming or just part of Australia's ever changing environment is still being hotly debated. Meanwhile the entire country is watching, evaluating what is surviving and what is not and waiting to see what the weather does next.

During these times it is salutary to observe what has survived (or thrived) in the historic gardens across the nation. One of the surviving gardens, which is almost 130 years old, is 'Trevenna', located in the grounds of the University of New England in Armidale, northern New South Wales.

Trevenna was originally the home of Mrs Eliza Jane Wright, widow of Philip Wentworth Wright. The couple had been graziers based at Bickham in the Hunter Valley, where they raised their family. In 1885 Mr Wright purchased a parcel of approximately 90 acres of land [36 hectares] on the outskirts of Armidale, land which is now part of the University of New England campus. Canadian-born Boston-trained architect John Horbury Hunt (1838–1904) was commissioned to design the house to be built on the site. Wright intended to retire to Armidale, but he died in 1890 before the house was built. From 1888 to 1890 Hunt produced a series of designs for the house. Trevenna was finished by March 1892. Mrs Wright named the property after her birthplace in Cornwall. 'Trevenna' is translated from the Cornish as 'farm on the hillside'. She was a keen gardener and early photographs show her in the garden with her daughters and gardening staff even when she was well into her eighties. She died in 1909 at the age of 89.

Heritage significance

A number of Hunt's noteworthy buildings, both domestic and public, were built in the New England region around the time of Trevenna's construction, including arguably his most important domestic work, 'Booloominbah'. Trevenna is located within the original curtilage of Booloominbah but at a respectful distance to maintain the privacy of both houses. The Office of Environment and Heritage NSW's statement of significance acknowledges that Trevenna clearly demonstrates national significance due to its association with John Horbury Hunt and its ability to assist in the understanding of the history of Australian architecture. While the house at Trevenna was listed as a heritage item by the former Armidale Dumaresq Council on 30 July 1993, the garden was not.

The homestead and its grounds were bequeathed to the University of New England in 1960 by descendants of Phillip and Eliza and in 1961 it was designated as the university's Vice Chancellor's residence.

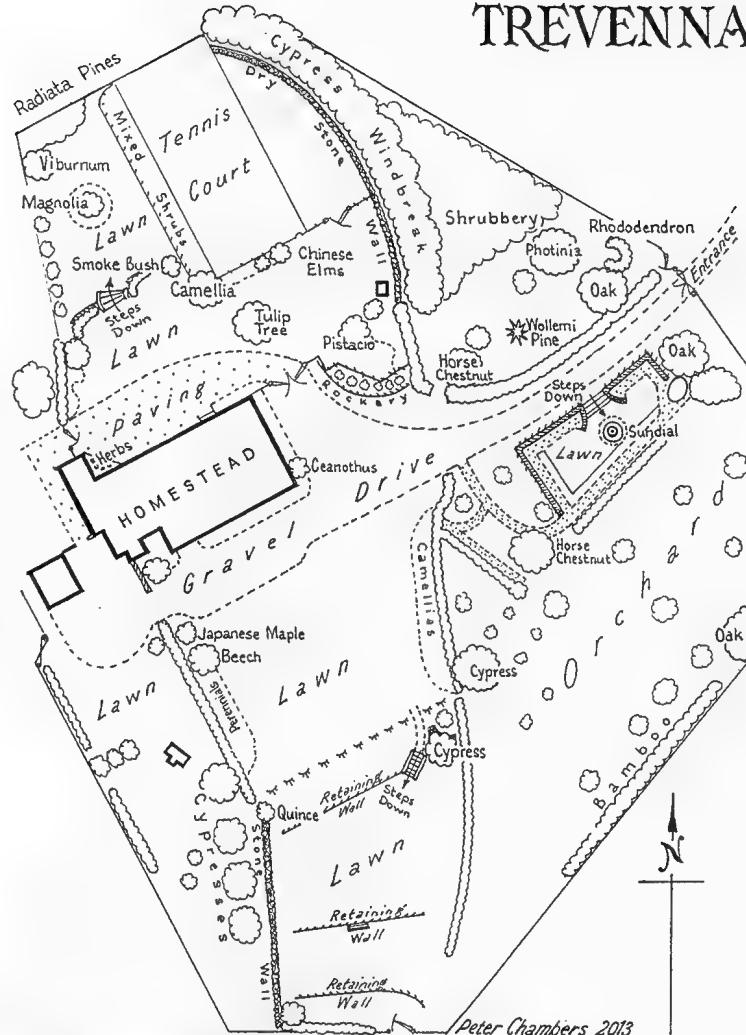
Trevenna's garden was the feature of a Women's Weekly special in 1971 and opened to the public twice in the 2010s under the Australian Open Garden Scheme. It also featured as one of the gardens open to delegates of the Australian Garden History Society national conference in 2013.

Vice-chancellors as custodians

With the support of the University of New England, 12 vice-chancellors were custodians of Trevenna and its garden between 1961 and 2019. Professor Brigid Heywood ('hopefully not unlucky thirteen', she says) took up the position of vice-chancellor in early 2019 and moved into Trevenna. Brigid had no family background of gardening and taught herself, beginning with the creation of a bog garden in Staffordshire in her native UK before gardening and observing gardens as she and David moved around the world.

They have lived in or visited Washington DC, South Africa, west Africa, South-East Asia, New Zealand, and Tasmania. Moving around the world and moving house regularly has given her the opportunity to see many different gardens, an opportunity she clearly relishes.

I've learned my gardening craft by the 'doing' method rather than being instructed. It's great relaxation and I like the task of managing the earth and nurturing an outcome. Each garden I have been custodian of has required different skill sets and I have been mindful of the emotion of each garden and how it was created.



Above Plan of Trevenna's garden, prepared for the 2013 AGHS annual conference, which was held in Armidale. Peter Chambers

Left Vice-Chancellor Professor Brigid Heywood and her husband David outside Trevenna, December 2019. photo James White



Top Aerial view of Trevenna at the time of AGHS's 2013 conference. photo A Pettigrew

Middle Trevenna's garden shows the effects of protracted drought. The smokebush (*Cotinus*) in the centre of the image is particularly ancient, as is the box hedging on the right. photo James White

Bottom Water recycling, December 2019. photo James White

Brigid and her husband David could not have assumed their custodianship of Trevenna under worse conditions. Much of the Trevenna landscape is badly scarred by the drought of recent years. They are resolved to watch and wait for the first 12 months, apart from recycling as much of their greywater as they can.

Brigid says:

The first thing to do is to have a carefully developed plan. John Horbury Hunt had the vision of the rolling green lawns and who knows, we may have that again. For now we have to work on landscape regeneration and invest effort in modern sustainable garden design as well as giving voice to the historic intent. I think we might think about recreating at Trevenna an example of a drought resistant garden.

A description of the Trevenna garden written when it opened for Australia's Open Garden Scheme in 2009 describes the garden as follows:

Approached through a long avenue of pines, planes, cypress and horse chestnuts, the Trevenna gardens are constructed on several levels. The visitor is welcomed by a sunken garden at the entrance, with a stone sundial. The sundial is surrounded by lavender and petunias, as are the border gardens, with camellias and box hedging beyond. On the other side of the entrance a series of hedges encloses a private lawn. Many of the trees, including horse chestnuts, pines and planes, date back to when the house was built.

The front garden slopes away into a series of ha-ha walls, and wide perennial borders lead the eye to the city of Armidale. These wide borders are planted with a variety of shrubs including camellias, rhododendrons and a range of autumn flowering perennials. Ivy and grapevines ramble along the old stone walls around the garden.

At the rear of the house a wide sweep of lawn leads down to another sunken garden where a magnolia forms the centrepiece in a small oval bed planted with dry shade-lovers. A shaded border with hellebores, windflowers and violets provides a soft, leafy barrier between the garden and the tennis court.

An impressive range of mature trees adds to the ambience and tranquillity of the garden.

While the framework of the original trees remains, the soft underplantings have largely gone. Brigid observes:

Everything below kangaroo height has gone so we need to record what is happening and take the opportunity to use a few plants which thrive, and do them well.

I would like to leave the garden in a better state than I have found it by putting in drought-tolerant plants in the short term, but also ensuring the garden remains harmonic with the house.

An excellent blueprint for the future which could be applied to all gardens, historic or not.

AGHS member **Lynne Walker** was Northern NSW coordinator for the former Australia's Open Garden Scheme. She has led garden tours to the UK and to NZ. She writes for national and international magazines while continuing to farm cattle with her husband Richard Bird.



A preview of three garden histories

Tim Gatehouse

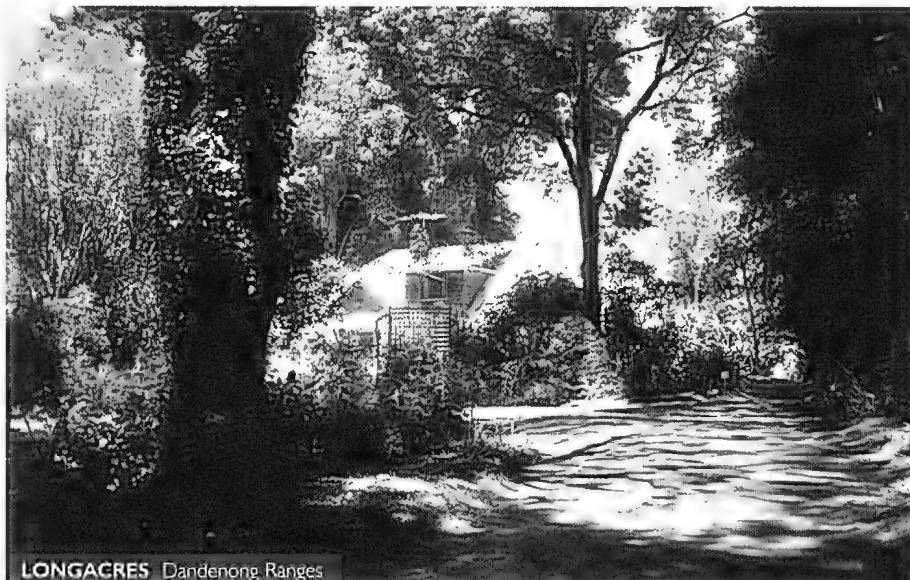
I have been commissioned by AGHS (Victorian branch) to prepare histories of three gardens in Victoria for publication as individual booklets later this year. They are Umina in Toorak, the headquarters of the Country Women's Association of Victoria, Longacres at Olinda in the Dandenong Ranges, the country home of Sir Arthur Streeton, and Titanga, a grazing property in the Western District of Victoria.

Umina

Umina stands in a half hectare garden in Lansell Road, Toorak. It is unusual in having expanded during the 20th century, when so many large gardens were reduced or subdivided into extinction. This garden developed in two stages. The earlier one was to the design of prominent garden designers and nurserymen Taylor and Sangster. It surrounded the 1870s Italianate villa designed by architects Smith and Johnson for John MacPherson, a premier of Victoria. The later stage was developed in the 1920s when the owner, Norman Bayles, purchased additional land when the adjoining property was subdivided. The expanded garden was the setting for much of the Bayles family's social life between the wars. The identity of the designer of this part of the garden is still subject to speculation, although there are some clues which will be explored in the history. Alterations to the building and garden have been made since its purchase by the CWA, but both house and garden remain basically intact.

Longacres

Longacres at Olinda, now approaching its centenary, is one of the oldest gardens in the Dandenongs, and played a major role in the creative life of its first owner, Sir Arthur Streeton. He was attracted to Olinda by the close resemblance it then bore to Heidelberg, which he always remembered for the idyllic



years he lived there, and where his consciousness of the Dandenongs, which appeared prominently on the horizon of so many of his paintings, was awoken.

The possession of a garden was part of Streeton's vision of a settled domestic life, but was a dream long denied, and not achieved until middle age. When he was finally able to fulfil it, the garden provided another outlet for his creativity which in time supplanted painting. Like many others, he discovered the therapeutic value of gardening when the small garden he established at the hospital for wounded soldiers in London where he worked as an orderly during World War 1 provided relief from the stress he suffered. Longacres was to become his retreat from the irritations of life in Melbourne, and after the death of his wife, his permanent home. It was always his spiritual home, and he was extremely proud of having designed the house himself, and personally laid out, planted and cultivated the garden.

Longacres was a major source of inspiration for Streeton's art. After he settled there he painted not only the landscapes on which his earlier reputation had been made, but also more homely scenes of the immediate surroundings, the house, garden and flower studies. They reflected his contentment with the life he lived there. Longacres also influenced Streeton's views as a conservationist, at a time when the concept was scarcely understood. The destruction of the native forests, which occurred in the immediate vicinity of his home, became a theme of many of his paintings. Virtually unaltered since Streeton's death and still in the possession of his family, Longacres forms a personal link with one of Australia's greatest artists.

Titanga

Titanga is a grazing property located on the windswept plains of western Victoria. The garden and its wider setting have been created by the modification and judicious management of the natural conditions of the site by the property's owners over the course of its long history. Although the predominant landform of the district is a flat basalt plain punctuated by volcanic cones, Titanga homestead stands on a ridge of granite-based soil with limited availability of water. This was not conducive to the creation of the usual type of homestead garden, a clearly defined oasis isolated from the surrounding landscape.

First settled in 1840, the freehold title to Titanga was obtained by Alexander Buchanan in 1871. The homestead was built to the design of

architects Davidson and Henderson on the ridge amidst the natural woodland of banksia, acacia and casuarina, with extensive views across the plains to Mount Elephant and Lake Tooliarook. A formal garden of two acres was laid out at the side and rear of the house, designed to suit the dry conditions. With gravel paths, hedging, drought-tolerant plants and absence of lawn, it was designed as a dry climate garden and has been maintained as such to this day.

The existing outlook over the plains was improved by the planting of additional trees in the vicinity of the house to enhance its parklike setting. When Alexander Buchanan died in 1882 Titanga was inherited by his brother Colonel James John Neale Buchanan, who in 1886 sold it to neighbouring grazier John Lang Currie. It subsequently passed to Currie's daughter Henrietta and son-in-law Patrick Sellar Lang and continues in the ownership of the Lang family. The systematic planting and recording of trees on the property has been practised by succeeding generations of the family. An arboretum of eucalypts extending for nearly two kilometres from the entrance gates to the house, and experimental plantations to ascertain the most suitable trees for shelter belts for stock on the open plains were also established.

Unusually for the period, the garden and landscape at Titanga were planned, and have always been managed, with the environmental conditions of the site in mind. They remain today as they were envisioned. The systematic tree planting in the home paddocks, the experimental plantations and the meticulous records kept of the results have been of influence beyond the property's boundaries. The visual result of this environmental management is a house sitting comfortably in the landscape, without any intermediary zone of a formal garden which is discretely out of sight. It is an Australian interpretation of English 18th century gardening principles practised by Capability Brown where the parkland was brought right up to the house, and as such is probably unique in Victoria.

Tim Gatehouse is a retired lawyer interested in the pre-gold rush history of Victoria, architectural history and the history of gardening. His articles on these subjects have appeared in various journals.

All images in this article supplied by Tim Gatehouse.





Colin Randall

The ship's garden at Garden Island

Just 16 days after the establishment of the colony of New South Wales in Sydney Cove, the ship's log of HMS *Sirius* recorded a start to a garden on one of the islands in Sydney Harbour. This is today's Garden Island.

The first records of a ship's garden were in the first half 14th century by Ibn Battuta, the Muslim Berber Moroccan scholar who when travelling to China observed:

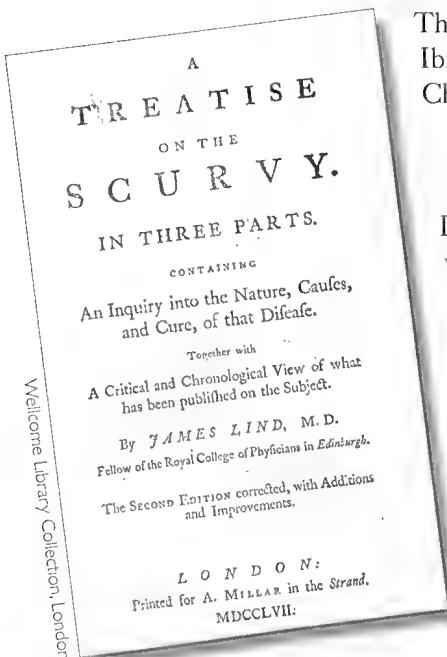
The sailors have their children living on board ship and they cultivate green stuffs, vegetables and ginger in wooden tanks.

In the 17th century, it was Dutch ship's captains who understood the value of fresh greens for the health of their crews on the long voyages to and from the Far East. In 1632 on the ship *Grel*, for example, a garden was laid out that provided horseradish, cresses and scurvy grass. Gardens established on ships in tubs grew the required vegetables and in some cases citrus trees.

The practice was so pervasive that shipowners in 1677 forbade it when they became concerned that the root systems of some plants and trees were causing damage to ships. As an alternative, the Dutch East Indies company (better known by its initials, VOC) established gardens ashore at strategic places along the sea route at St Helena in the South Atlantic, the Cape of Good Hope and on Mauritius. By

Joseph Lycett 'Distant view of Sydney from the Light House at South Head, New South Wales', showing Garden Island (centre of middle distance). Plate 3 from *Views in Australia or New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land*, John Souter, London (1824–25).

National Library of Australia



Wellcome Library Collection, London



Above The main office square looking north up the Hill, ca 1909. The flat area is the site of the original garden.

Right Photograph taken in 1857, looking south, showing the fairly flat area used for the garden.

Naval Historical Society of Australia

1661 more than a thousand citrus trees had been planted in VOC farms and gardens at the Cape. The vegetables and citrus fruit helped fight the dreaded scurvy that caused the death of so many sailors well into the 19th century.

By the end of the 18th century the principal way of combating scurvy was through the practice of supplying ship's company with green vegetables, onions and lime juice. Onboard ship gardens persisted too, for example in 1795 aboard the East Indiaman the *Cirencester*, where the captain – unable to procure any lime-juice – ‘converted a part of his own apartments into a garden which he managed himself with wonderful success’.

And it became regular practice that if a Royal Navy vessel was to be located at a particular place for any length of time, the ship would establish a garden ashore to provide the fresh vegetables so essential to keep the crew healthy.

HMS *Sirius*: Port Jackson ship's garden

On 11 February 1788, aboard HMS *Sirius* in Port Jackson, just 16 days after the establishment of the colony of New South Wales in Sydney Cove, the ship's log recorded:



Sent an officer and party ashore to the garden island to clear it for a garden for the ship's company.

Lieutenant Collins also refers to the establishment of the garden, noting on 18 February 1788 ‘the island where the people of the *Sirius* were preparing a garden’. This garden for the ship's company of HMS *Sirius* was established on the twin-hummocked island that we now call Garden Island, east of Sydney Cove. Over the next 22 years it provided fresh vegetables for a succession of Royal Navy vessels, including HMS *Sirius*, *Supply* (I), *Supply* (II), *Lady Nelson*, *Porpoise* and *Buffalo*.

The captain of HMS *Lady Nelson*, Lieutenant Grant, reasserted the use of the garden, and the Government and General Order published on 8 January 1801 read:

Garden Island being appropriated as a garden for the ‘Lady Nelson’, no person is to land there but with Lieutenant Grant's permission, or the Governor's in his absence.

The garden went out of Royal Navy control in 1811 when the new governor, Lieutenant-Colonel Lachlan Macquarie, took the island into the governor's domain and used it to raise poultry for the governor's table.

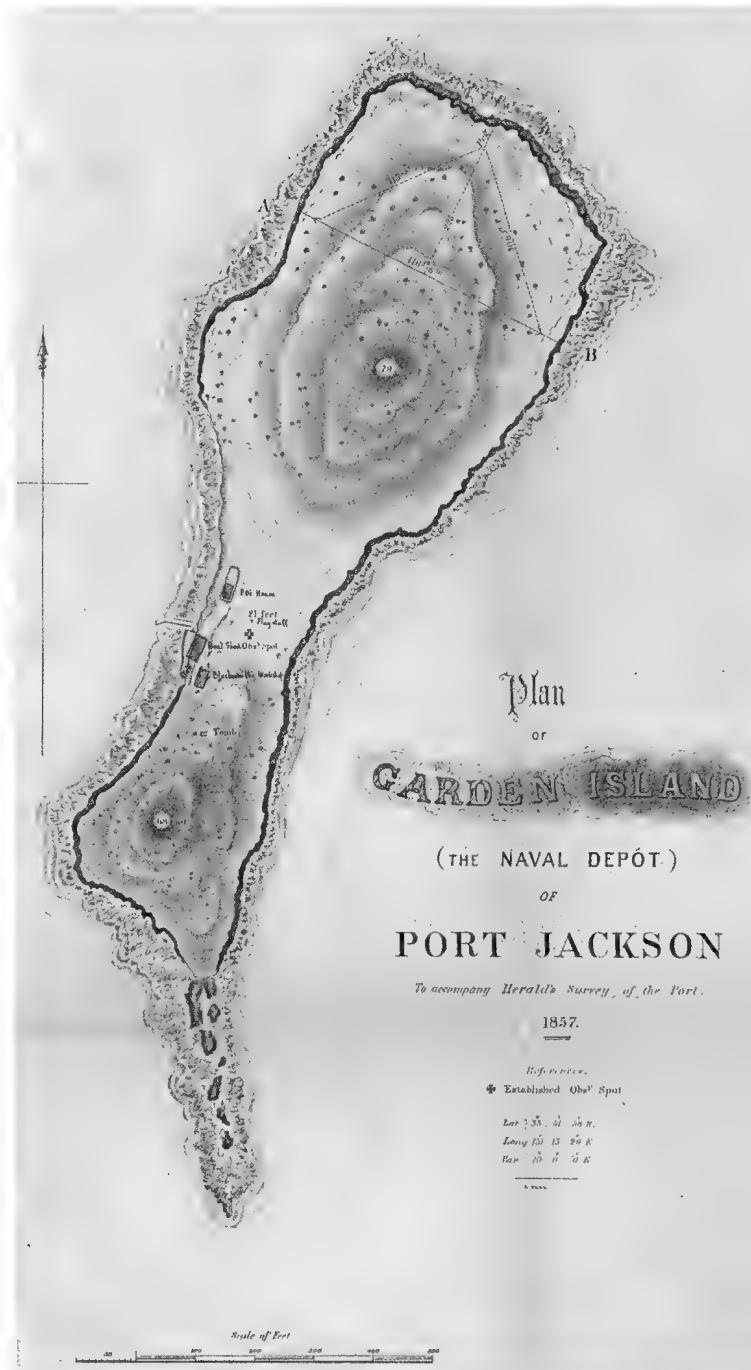


Confrontations

The Gadigal people of the Eora nation had managed their land for more than 40,000 years. When the sea levels stabilised around 6000 years ago they managed the land on today's Garden Island, which they knew as Booroowang, *a fishing place*. While there was no running water, the natural sandstone outcrops provided pools and soaks. There is no record of how the flat area of the garden was used by Aboriginal people, but it was no doubt used frequently and for a variety of purposes.

Just one week after the start on the garden, a group of 17 Aboriginal people landed on the island. Sighted from on board HMS *Sirius*, they were seen to take some of the tools. Midshipman Mr Hill ordered marines to fire at their legs with buckshot, resulting in the dropping of an axe and a pick, but a spade was removed. *Sirius* thereafter posted marines ashore on the island to guard the tools and the garden plot.

HMS *Sirius* left for Norfolk Island in 1789. In a letter to his mother of 19 February 1789, midshipman Daniel Southwell noted that the ship had 'left a man to look after a kind of kitchen garden to the service of HMS *Sirius*'. (The *Sirius*



was wrecked on Norfolk Island but its crew was eventually repatriated to Sydney.)

Convicts were assigned to work alongside the seamen in the garden. The most notable was a 24-year-old Jamaican servant, John Caesar, who was sentenced to seven years transportation for stealing 12 pounds. In June 1789 he was put to work on Garden Island, in irons as a result of his troublesome behaviour. Subsequently he was released from his irons and absconded in a canoe, having stolen a musket. His story of escape, recapture, imprisonment on Norfolk Island, return to Sydney Cove, a small land grant, and eventual return to theft and robbery ended when 'Black Caesar', as he was then known, was shot and killed by a settler.

1857 plan of Garden Island, Port Jackson, to accompany the Herald's survey of the port.

Naval Historical Society of Australia

Official documents, ships' logs and diaries of those involved in this monumental enterprise of sending 1200 people halfway around the world to establish a penal colony record what was grown on Garden Island. The first planting was of corn and onions. The crop flourished and was picked in July 1788.

In 1803 a group of men were seen plundering the garden. A marine fired on the group but appeared to target an Aboriginal man amongst a group of mainly white men, resulting in the Aboriginal man's death.

The 1803 coronial enquiry (which led to a verdict of justifiable homicide) recorded that when the other men fled the island they left behind a canoe and small fishing boat that contained 'maize, melons etcetera'.

The garden and its fate

The garden was 145 feet (44.2 m) by 160 feet (48.8 m). There was no permanent water on the island. There are no records of the digging of a well but a plan of 1857 shows two 'tanks' to the east of the area set aside for the garden. Given the presence of the two sandstone hills, it is probable that with drainage works, run-off could be directed into the tanks, while with additional seepage into the tanks, sufficient water could be collected to maintain the garden.

With the departure of HMS *Buffalo* from Sydney in 1807 the need for a stand-alone ship's garden was greatly diminished. By that time, any ship requiring vegetables could easily acquire them from the many Sydney market gardens.

In the middle of what had been the gardens, an observation spot was established as part of the Admiralty's longitude studies, in the form of a stone cairn that was marked on the 1851 map.

The Botanic Garden and Garden Island, ca 1875.
Naval Historical Society of Australia



Its location was given as

Latitude 33 degrees 51 minutes and 45 seconds South and longitude 10 hours 10 minutes and 5 seconds East (152 degrees 31 minutes and 15 seconds East) noting a deviation of 62 degrees 41 minutes South and variation of 10 degrees 10 minutes East.

Before 1875 the garden was incorporated, in part, into a 'lawn tennis ground' – possibly the first lawn tennis court in Sydney. A detailed map of the island dated 1875 also shows the location of a pump to the east of the lawn tennis ground.

As far as we can now tell, the original ship's garden was located in the square behind the clock tower building.

Acknowledgement

A version of this article appears as occasional paper no 70, 'The ship's garden', on the Naval Historical Society of Australia's website.

Heritage tours of Garden Island

Garden Island became part of Australia's naval history just 16 days after the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, firstly as a ship's garden. It developed into a naval depot near the end of the 19th century, and ceased to be an island in 1945 with the completion of construction of the dry dock, making it contiguous with Potts Point.

For details of heritage tours, see

- *Australian Garden History* vol 31 no 2, or
- navyhistory.org.au

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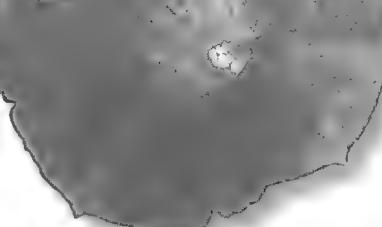
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Colin Randall is a volunteer researcher with the Naval Historical Society of Australia. He lived in Residence 'C' on Garden Island while attending high school/university and has written about Garden Island's naval garden in *Australian Garden History* vol 31 no 2 (2019).





John Dwyer



Morning glory

'I hate and I love. If you ask me to explain the contradiction, I do not know, but I can feel it, and am tormented.'

Gaius Valerius Catullus (84–54 BC)

The plant called morning glory (*Ipomoea indica*) has aroused strong and conflicting feelings. American Edwin Rollin Spencer, for example, chose an image of morning glory for the cover of his book *All about weeds* (1968), and acknowledged 'the beautiful flowers that truly glorify a summer's morning', but then went on to describe it as 'a hateful weed'.

Closer to home, Kate Blood wrote in *Environmental weeds: a field guide for SE Australia* (2001),

The magnificent purple flowers of morning glory traditionally signify "affection".

With the plant's affection for smothering everything in its path, it has become a serious weed.

Morning glory's family history

There are about 500 annual and perennial species of the genus *Ipomoea* (family Convolvulaceae), many of them trailers or twining climbers. The name 'morning glory' is used not only for *I. indica* but for several other ipomoeas, as well as some other plants in the family including bindweed, *Convolvulus arvensis*.

Native to tropical regions of the New World, *I. indica* is a fast-growing frost-tender perennial with climbing or trailing stems, heart-shaped or three-lobed leaves and showy funnel-shaped flowers of blue turning to purple. Each flower lasts only one day.

The Royal Horticultural Society's Dictionary of gardening says:

Where climate allows, many (*Ipomoea* spp.) are valuable in the open garden for their late showy flowers and vigorous climbing habit when used to clothe walls, trellising or natural hosts. Rampant species (eg *I. indica*, *I. alba*) are best confined to boundaries or used for covering unsightly garden structures.

Morning glory at Mt Eliza, Melbourne.
photo John Dwyer

Detail Morning glory, *Ipomoea indica*.
photo Bob Peterson, Wikimedia Commons



The note of caution did not prevent the Society from giving *Ipomoea indica* 'Heavenly Blue' their Award of Garden Merit in 1993. In June 2004, morning glory was 'Plant of the Month' at St Andrews Botanic Garden, where it is grown in the warm glasshouse.

Medicinal and psychedelic use

Morning glory has a long history of medicinal use. An example from Australia of the use of medicinal herbs is provided by the *Henry Journals* recording life at the tiny settlement near Portland in the 1830s. Their use of *jallup* to treat constipation refers to jalap, perhaps obtained from the roots of *Ipomoea purga* (all the *Convolvulus* family have purgative properties in greater or less degree). Daniel Bunce's catalogue of seeds and plants on sale in Hobart town in 1836 included 'Ipomea' (sic).

Many *Ipomoea* species including *I. indica* contain alkaloids with psychoactive potential. One of these alkaloids, ergovine, is similar in structure to LSD. Another species, *I. violacea*, was valued as a sacred hallucinogen among the Aztecs. Richard Schultes, sometimes called the father of ethnobotany, has documented its continued use in modern times among the Zapotec people of Mexico.

Left A house enveloped in morning glory, North Fitzroy, Melbourne.
photo John Dwyer

Right Blue morning glory (*Ipomoea indica*) on the main road to Piha, New Zealand, 16 February 2005.
photo Alan Leiting
Wiki Commons

An intriguing occurrence

A plant identified as *I. indica* was collected by Sir Joseph Banks and Dr Daniel Solander between 17 June and 4 August 1770. Cook's *Endeavour* became stuck on Endeavour Reef on 11 June 1770, and in a badly damaged condition was got ashore on the banks of Endeavour River for repairs. Under sail again, she departed on 6 August.

The plant is included in *Joseph Banks Florilegium* (2017). In this, David Mabberley comments (p 218):

Ipomoea indica is said to be native in tropical America and to be introduced elsewhere, but it is difficult then to explain its occurrence in Australia before European settlement, suggesting that there is work to be done on this group of morning glories.

Was the plant the botanists collected *Ipomoea indica*? The *Joseph Banks Florilegium* image is of a pale blue flower, whereas the flowers of *I. indica* are deep blue turning to purple. The image is described as 'copper plate by John Lee, based on John Miller's 1773 watercolour, derived from Parkinson's surviving pencil drawing ... This was one of the plates Banks sent to Linnaeus.' Solander had been a pupil of Linnaeus's. Parkinson's note described the flowers as 'pale blue [with] a cast of pink appearing like a lilac colour turning very pale at the tube' and the coloured drawing depicts this, although Miller had not seen the flower. Could the plant be another *Ipomoea* species, or an unusual variety of morning glory?

If the Banks specimen is — despite the lack of deep blue-purple flowers — *Ipomoea indica*, then how did it reach Australia? There is a reasonable hypothesis that it may have been introduced, accidentally perhaps, during Portuguese exploration of the east coast of Australia in the 16th century.

Peter Trickett's *Beyond Capricorn: how Portuguese adventurers secretly discovered and mapped Australia 250 years before Captain Cook* (2007) includes a map of the Queensland coastline, with features named in Portuguese, published in the *Vallard Atlas* (1547) as 'Terra Java'.

Trickett argues that the coastline is recognisably that of eastern Australia, including the mouth of

the Endeavour River. Manuel Moleiro, the Spanish editor of a current printing of the *Vallard Atlas* (2010), accepts that it depicts in detail the north-eastern coast of Australia, including the Endeavour River under the name 'Rio Darena'. Trickett's book took into account Kenneth McIntyre's *The secret discovery of Australia* (1977). From McIntyre we learn that the Vallard Atlas map of the east coast of Australia was one of the maps made by cartographers at Dieppe between 1536 and 1566, based on Portuguese explorations. McIntyre's analysis was based on a comparison of another of the Dieppe charts, the Desliens (1566), which is very similar to the Vallard map and to a modern map. There is a point of difference between the Portuguese maps of the Endeavour River and a modern map: the harbour is smaller than they show. As Cook noted in his journal 'the Harbour much smaller than I had been told, but very convenient for our purpose'. The Portuguese maps were secret because they described places on the Spanish side of the line of demarcation between Spain and Portugal; but it seems that Cook may have had a copy among his secret instructions.



Brazil, where morning glory is indigenous, was colonised by the Portuguese from 1500 onwards. I have not been able to discover when morning glory was introduced to Portugal, but it is now listed there as an invasive species present in mainland Portugal, all islands in the Azores archipelago, and the Madeira archipelago. So morning glory may have been introduced to

Australia by a Portuguese sailor 250 years before Banks and Solander collected it.

Why would a Portuguese mariner have been in possession of seeds of morning glory? The answer may be the chemicals closely related to LSD, with similar psychedelic properties, contained in *Ipomoea* seeds.

An invasive weed

Morning glory is now an invasive weed in many countries. *Invasive plant species of the world* (2003) says:

In the native range, this herb grows in coastal sites, moist forests and disturbed places. It originates probably from South America, but the exact native range is obscure. The trailing stems lead to dense infestations that crowd out native vegetation by smothering shrubs and trees.

The species is invasive in southern Europe, southern Africa, Australia, and New Zealand (where it is illegal to sell propagate and distribute the plant). *An illustrated guide to common weeds of New Zealand* (Roy et al 1998) describes *I. indica* as an 'extremely attractive tropical plant grown for ornament and now growing wild in many places'.

In Australia, morning glory has long been recognised as a weedy garden escape. Whittet's *Weeds* (1962), using the name *Ipomoea congesta*, described it as 'growing plentifully in the coastal districts of New South Wales, and infesting both garden and cultivation areas', although he acknowledged its 'attractive large bell shaped flowers'. The species is a declared noxious weed in New South Wales.

Similarly, *Weeds of the South East* (2016) says, 'Commonly grown over garden fences, it is rampant and smothering and occasionally weedy in wasteland, forest margins and along roadsides'. *CSIRO handbook of Australian weeds* (1997) notes:

Vigorous rapid growing weed and widely cultivated climber; seeds reported overseas to be strongly purgative, the roots strongly cathartic, and the leaves chewed, used for bruises and for pig food; noxious weed in parts of [New South Wales].

So morning glory is a troublesome plant that can be difficult to keep under control, and gives rise to conflicting emotions. Nevertheless, the splendid flowers are, I think, well worth the effort.

Joseph Banks
Florilegium image.

Dr John Dwyer is a retired QC and a former chair of AGHS. His publications include *Weeds, plants and people* (2016), and many articles in *Australian Garden History* about weeds and landscape.



An invitation from our Patron

Tim Entwistle



photo Bernadette Hince

In October 2019 the Australian Garden History Society's patron Professor Tim Entwistle welcomed participants to our 40th annual national conference, 'Expanding Horizons', held in Wellington. It was AGHS's first annual conference to be held in New Zealand.

Our patron's opening remarks (reproduced here) include an invitation – or perhaps a challenge – to stay connected to our landscape history through our garden choices.

The horizons of both Europeans and indigenous peoples of this region were expanded 250 years ago, when HM Bark *Endeavour* landed in New Zealand and then in what became Australia. In the context of this disruption – to put it mildly and coldly – through what lens do we view the ensuing history of gardens in the two countries?

The landscapes and plants that the settlers brought with them displaced and disrupted landscapes and plant assemblies shaped over thousands or tens of thousands of years of human history, and millions of years of evolutionary history.

From my reading of Bruce Pascoe's *Dark emu* and other conversations, I think it's fair to say that in Australia gardens, and gardening, for pleasure are cultural constructs brought to the region by recent immigrants – along with monarchy, flags and oddly inappropriate seasons (to name just a few minor intrusions).

Good gardens – like good western architecture, literature, music and art – are something to be celebrated and enjoyed. They don't necessarily benefit from retrofitting or reimaging in a

pre-European context. Yet they should, I think, be seen in a broader context, as part of the expanded horizon.

At a fundamental level the plants we grow **can have an impact on the environment** around us. I'm sympathetic to the views of AGHS member John Dwyer (*Weeds, plants and people*) and writers such as Fred Pearce (*The new wild*), but I do not argue for willingly encouraging the spread of an invasive plant or animal. Every plant we add to our garden is an intervention.

Even the incorporation of 'local' flora is vexed. Unless you use plants native to your actual garden plot, selecting from any broader geographical construct (eg Australia or New Zealand) is for patriotic or perhaps wildlife attracting reasons. Which is fine. If you consider water and toxic chemical implications, and that weediness, then whether a plant is from Bunbury, Bougainville or Beijing is all the same.

Cultural connection is even harder. We are protective of the history and craft of European gardens. We are quite rightly wary of cultural appropriation, just as we are of creating mock heritage buildings. Yet gardens that embrace the surrounding landscape, whether farmland or bushland, are to be encouraged and admired. That bushland or pastureland will often have its own deep connection to country, mostly quite altered in the last few centuries, but something we can and should draw on where we can.

Perhaps I'm too dismissive of the national floras in our gardens, which reflect a shared connection to the land and its plant life. While Australia is home to many Indigenous nations, each with its own language, flora, seasons and broader culture, a way of uniting this deep history with our more recent introductions such as 'the garden' may be in our choice of plants.

So, I'm surprised to hear myself say this, but to expand your horizon, use your garden to feature plant species or plant collections that have some cultural significance to you and if you can, to the land on which you garden. It's a garden, not a wild landscape, but find ways to reflect where you are. While gardens can be oases or courtyards, and legitimately block out the world around, find a way to let a chink of light in so that you stay connected to the present and the past.



Liz Ware

New Zealand – a Pom's first impressions

AGHS's South Island gardens tour, October 2019

Friends were surprised. Why would a fiercely independent traveller choose to spend two weeks of her first trip to New Zealand visiting gardens with a group? My friends aren't garden historians. If they were, they would know that, when it comes to getting under the skin of a country, there's nothing quite like a garden history tour. Whether we're absorbing social history or learning from the extensive plant knowledge of hospitable garden owners, the rich itinerary of a well organised tour provides a density of insights and experiences it would be difficult to organise independently. Without doubt, Lynne Walker's South Island tours are up there with the best.

Beginnings

The tour began in Christchurch, the 'garden city' of New Zealand. Quite by chance, some of the group met for the first time at the 'Cardboard Cathedral,' the temporary home of the Anglican Cathedral damaged by the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes. As we listened in the light-filled building to the choir's rendition of Faure's Requiem, it was impossible not to reflect on the horrors this city has experienced in the last decade and to hope that its gardens have brought some comfort.

It was a poignant introduction to the country and to a tour that would carry us down the east coast of Canterbury, heading inland to Mount Hutt, then returning to the coast and southwards through Otago to Dunedin. For the final leg we would head back inland through Central Otago to Lake Wanaka, and on to Queenstown, our final destination. The tour notes promised a meticulously planned itinerary and 26 gardens – ranging from coastal to high country, urban to remote, and historic to recent. It was obvious that we were in good hands.

High country garden,
Canterbury.
all photos Lynne Walker



First impressions

New Zealand in spring is greener than green, particularly after a very wet winter. While I savoured the sights, sounds and smells of my second spring in a year, some of my fellow travellers commented that the verdant landscape was almost a shock to their eyes. It was of course, in complete contrast to the drought-stricken and already burning Australian landscape they'd left behind.

Coming from a crowded UK, the emptiness of the Canterbury plains seemed extraordinary. That sense of being in a country where there is space to breathe would stay with me throughout my time in New Zealand. Inevitably, strong winds are a feature of these flat and open plains and the creation of shelter belts an essential part of developing a garden. Little surprise then, that our first garden, Broadfield, should be surrounded by huge hedges of totara (*Podocarpus totara*).

Over the last 20 years, Broadfield's owner has created three and a half hectares of garden from land that was previously paddock. Hedges not only protect, but also divide the space into a diverse collection of garden rooms, all showcasing plants that are either native varieties or bred in New Zealand. It was an excellent introduction to the country's plant heritage.



Regeneration

The regeneration of grazed land also played a part in the creation of French Farm garden, a lush and tranquil delight near Akaroa, on the Banks Peninsula. The current owners welcomed us, explaining that the previous residents had taken the brave step to remove stock from land that had been grazed for over 100 years. To do so, they used New Zealand's Queen Elizabeth II National Trust (QE II) covenants, which aim to protect natural and cultural heritage sites. In 2003, these were put in place, protecting sections of the property and its native trees for the future.

High above Hoopers Inlet, half an hour from Dunedin, we visited a property making similar use of QE II covenants. While much of the native forest on the Otago Peninsula was cleared during the 19th century, a small area survived and is now protected. Hereweka's owners work the four and a half hectares organically, planting for the benefit of the birds and the environment. It was a joy to see my first fantail here – a bird familiar to many in the group but completely new to me.



Thoughts

We visited seven very different stations on our travels. Once again, these were novel experiences

for me. As my Australian farmer/gardener travel companions were already aware, succession can be a concern for the families who run them.

Terrace station, one of South Island's oldest, has found its own solution. The station dates back to the mid-1850s and was once the home of Sir John and Lady Hall. The peaceful garden and historic farm buildings are now the Terrace station charitable trust. At other stations, such as Middle Rock, members of the younger generation are becoming increasingly involved in management.

It was the owner of Clachanburn on the dry Maniototo Plain who provided an insight into the creation of some station gardens. She explained that when she arrived at the property with her late husband, men managed farms. In situations where children had to go away to school, women were left with a prematurely 'empty nest.' In order to give their lives purpose, some of these strong and intelligent women created magnificent gardens. Today, women are no longer sidelined. On stations where the younger generation are stepping into farm management, the women are equally involved. What, if anything, will this mean for the future of New Zealand's station gardens?

Throughout the tour, there was a lot of good-humoured banter from New Zealand garden owners about the damage caused to native flora and fauna by the unfortunate introduction of Australian possums by previous generations. New Zealand has grand plans to be rid of them and other introduced mammals by 2050. Their killing is encouraged and applauded.

Coming from the UK, a country described by the World Wildlife Fund as one of the most wildlife-depleted in the world — and where we are asked to welcome it to our gardens — the scale of the cull seems shocking. But there's little doubt that the birdsong we experienced at the predator-free Oronui Ecosanctuary near Dunedin was particularly rich and beautiful. Can both countries be sure that their different but equally radical attempts to restore balance will not have unforeseen consequences for future generations?

Reflections

Reflecting on my time in New Zealand, there's a sense of being bathed in beauty throughout my stay. Not only were the gardens beautiful in their spring freshness, but the landscapes surrounding them were more than magnificent. The plants and trees of the country's native bush cast their spell and I was impressed and inspired by those working to regenerate and to protect the country's rich plant heritage.

The 'beauty' that will stay with me was the friendly openness of the people. When I arrived in New Zealand, two weeks before Lynne Walker's tour, the first person I met was so friendly I assumed she'd mistaken me for someone she knew well. That friendliness was demonstrated by every New Zealander I encountered on the tour, from the generous garden owners who entertained us, to our bus driver, Reg. What a great tour. What a great country!

OPPOSITE

- A** Garden borders, Broadfield, sheltered by totara hedges.
- B** Clachanburn garden.
- C** Maple garden, Queenstown.



Left Now that's a gunnera. AGHS member Jim Vaughan in the garden of French Farm.



Liz Ware is a UK-based garden historian, writer and photographer. She founded and runs Silent Space, a not-for-profit project encouraging parks and gardens open to the public to reserve an area where visitors can reflect silently in nature. Liz will be writing about Silent Space in a future issue of *Australian Garden History*.





Delia Rothnie-Jones

An Australian gardener and a Fijian palm garden

The canopy at
the Flora Tropica
Gardens near
Savusavu, Fiji.
all photographs
Flora Tropica Gardens

The Flora Tropica botanical gardens of Savusavu celebrated their tenth anniversary in 2019. The gardens occupy a unique niche in Fiji, with their collection of over 250 palm species from across the world, many of them on the critical or endangered lists. Some are already extinct in their natural habitat. In these gardens one individual, an Australian gardener, has created an oasis of global palm diversity.

The Flora Tropica Gardens were created from the vision, effort and finance of Jim Valentine, an Australian landscape gardener from Brisbane. He arrived in Savusavu almost 30 years ago and put down deep roots (an appropriate pun!). Without any government or other grants, he planted the gardens in five acres of hillsides

and creek flats, constructing a series of timber walkways and stone paths up the hillside and then back down on the opposite slope. He has since cared for them with a dedicated staff who have learned many of the botanical names.

The gardens are five kilometres outside Savusavu and receive approximately 500 visitors a year, although Jim reported in 2019 that numbers have increased significantly. A visit starts at the tranquil lily pond at the bottom of the hill, and winds up the hill to glorious views across Savusavu Bay. The palms are magnificent, and there is also an abundance of other flora: various flowering trees, many varieties of variegated and flowering shrubs, orchids, heliconias, waterlilies and more than 40 types of tropical fruit trees. The rest areas along the walkway provide respite from the climb, and a place to stop and enjoy the serenity and beauty of the venue.



The gardens have hosted events, weddings and even yoga group meditation sessions.

In paying an entry fee of F\$20, visitors are directly contributing to the continuance of the existence of many plants threatened by habitat loss and other factors. Jim points with pride to the three species of Fijian palms that are endangered and now producing seeds under his care (*Neoveitchia storckii* and *Heterospathe phillipsii* (both endangered) and *Balaka macrocarpa* var. *bulitavu* (critically endangered)). Another three that he has in the gardens are classified as extinct or unknown in the wild, but are also producing seed: Sumawong's fan palm *Licuala peltata* var. *sumawongii* from Thailand and Malaysia (extinct in habitat), the bottle palm from Mauritius *Hyophorbe lagenicaulis* (extinct in habitat), and *Dypsis plumosa* from Madagascar (unknown in the wild).

'It's been hard work with really very little financial payback', says Jim. 'But then in the evenings I sit on my deck and look across the valley and think about what my gardeners and I have achieved, and I feel a great sense of pride. In a time of mounting concern about what we are doing to our planet, I can honestly say that between us, we're contributing something. We're keeping certain species alive, we're giving people a chance to appreciate rare and beautiful plants. The world is that little bit better off with us than without us.'

Delia Rothnie-Jones (delia@rothniejones.com) attended the opening of the Flora Tropica Gardens ten years ago, and is the owner of a nearby resort.

A Walkway in the gardens.

B Palm seeds, Flora Tropica Gardens.

C The Flora Tropica Gardens near Savusavu, Fiji, viewed from above.

D The palm *Mauritiella armata* at Flora Tropica Gardens.



'Many Dreams, One Landscape'

AGHS annual national conference

Sydney, 23 – 25 October 2020 plus optional day

Despite the current uncertainties, AGHS's Sydney branch committee is looking forward to hosting the 41st annual national conference of the Australian Garden History Society at Luna Park, Milsons Point, on the northern shores of Sydney Harbour. A day and a half of lectures will be followed by a day and a half of garden visits. Thursday 22 October 2020 includes a harbour cruise, Royal Botanic Gardens guided walks and a pre-registration welcome. Monday 26 October's optional day tour of the Camden area ends with a conference farewell at the Macarthur-Stanham family's historic garden at Camden Park House.

Pre and post-conference tours

There are two identical three-day/two-night tours (Mon 19 – Wed 21 Oct and Tues 27 – Thurs 29 Oct 2020) led by Stuart Read to historic gardens, villages and landscapes in the Blue Mountains.

Today Sydney Harbour, its landform and waterways form the city's dramatic backdrop. In 1795, an Eora gathering performed the kangaroo and dog dance, an initiation ceremony at Wogganmagully (Farm Cove). Gadigal, Cameragal, Burramattagal and Bijigal leaders attended. Associated with the Sydney region, these groups have been connected to country for over 60,000 years.

Grace Karskens opens the conference with a retelling of the powerful forces that shaped the region's ancient natural environment. Other speakers include Michael Ingrey and Paul Irish, John and Edwina Macarthur-Stanham, Janine Kitson, Colleen Morris, Wendy Whiteley and Janet Hawley, Roslyn Burge and Bronwyn Blake. We very much look forward to welcoming you!

Booking details

This April issue of Australian Garden History includes a conference brochure with booking details. Electronic bookings through www.trybooking.com/TTFFK will open on 1 May 2020 and postal bookings will also be processed from that day, including pre-conference and post-conference tours.

For the bookshelf

The stories of two Victorian botanic gardens

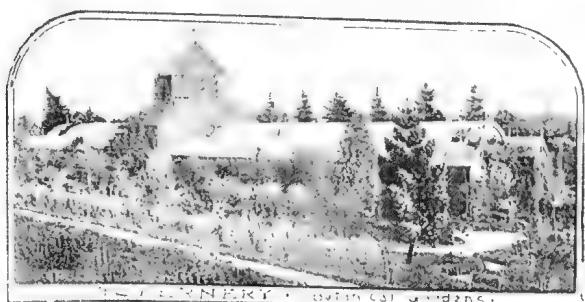
Ian Rogers (2018) *Kangaroo grassland to Geelong Botanic Gardens and Eastern Park: a chronological pictorial history*

Bookbound Publishing, 485 pp, available from the author \$80 (plus \$15 postage)

Ian Rogers is well positioned to write this beautifully illustrated, detailed chronological history of the Geelong Botanic Gardens. His forebears first came to Geelong and district in 1842, landing sheep at Point Henry from Van Diemen's Land (as Tasmania was then known). Ian was raised and educated in Geelong, and became superintendent of parks and gardens and botanic gardens curator in June 1981. On retiring from this position he was able to concentrate on writing this book.

The name Geelong is taken from the Watha Wurrung indigenous Aboriginal clan location name *Djillong*, although the book starts with the European history of the Geelong area, when Lieutenant James Grant on HMS *Lady Nelson* sailed the coastline and mapped Cape Otway, Point Roadknight and the Bellarine Peninsula in 1800. Explorers Hamilton Hume and William Hovell arrived in the area on 16 December 1824. Geelong was proclaimed a township in November 1838; within 10 years of settlement there was an interest in a botanic garden. The gardens are the fourth oldest botanic gardens in Australia, only preceded by Hobart, Sydney and Melbourne.

Daniel Bunce was the first curator. In the catalogue of the gardens published in 1860, Bunce mentions the oldest tree, a ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*) planted in 1859, which survives today, as does the pit glasshouse constructed on the directions of Bunce. In 1864 the Acclimatisation Society funded the building of an aviary for English and other songbirds to be acclimatised before release. Would we do this today? As had always been the case, funding was a serious issue and by 1874 the running of the botanic gardens was handed to the corporation of the town of Geelong.



The optional Monday trip will visit Camden Park garden. photo C Hay

**Kangaroo Grassland
to Geelong Botanic Gardens
and Eastern Park**
A CHRONOLOGICAL PICTORIAL HISTORY



RESEARCHED AND WRITTEN BY
Ian Rogers

1885–87 of local hardwood and lattice to admit light and air. By 1925 the central spire was removed and by 1948 the last of the fernery was gone. A conservatory built in 1876 was demolished in 1957. The AL Walter conservatory constructed in 1964 is still in use today. Commemorative gateways, statues, pedestal urns and fountains complement the plantings, while bollards of Daniel Bunce and Lady welcome visitors. The Lady has a guilty look, while Daniel Bunce holds a pot plant retrieved from her. Pilfering has long been a problem.

The gardens have three sections, the 19th, 20th and 21st century gardens. John Arnott (director 2000–07) oversaw the transplanting of mature trees into the 21st century garden. These included the dragon tree *Dracaena draco*, hoop pine *Araucaria cunninghamii*, coast banksia *B. integrifolia*, yellowwood *Afrocarpus falcatus* and the grass tree *Xanthorrhoea malacophylla*. This section also features local plants of the Geelong region, Gondwanan and dry-area plants.

There are 36 trees listed as significant by the National Trust of Australia within the Gardens and Eastern Park. Trees that are over 100 years old include the Chilean wine palm *Jubaea chilensis*, the soapbark *Quillaja saponaria* and the bunya pine *Araucaria bidwillii*.

The book provides a fascinating insight into the establishment and development of the Geelong Botanic Gardens. It reflects the history of changing fashions and attitudes to botanic gardens which add much value for those visitors who enjoy browsing gardens or those who are content to armchair travel.

Andy Russell is a retired farmer and grazier living in Canberra where he volunteers with not-for-profit environmental organisations. His article on a Western District property garden will appear in a forthcoming issue.

This history records structural changes – the Eastern Park Gardens cottage was built in 1855 to house the curator's family until it was replaced with a new house in 1942. The 97 m long Raddenberry fernery (named after John Raddenberry, curator 1872–1896) was built in

Diana Sawyer (2019) *Queenscliff: the Botanic Gardens story*

Queenscliffe Historical Museum, Queenscliffe, 38 pp. Available from the museum, \$25 including postage, admin@queenscliffe-history.org

The Queenscliff Botanic Gardens, begun in 1865, have a sadder history than that of the Geelong Botanic Gardens. The town was a popular destination for holidaymakers in the late 19th century and remains one today, but the original area of the gardens is now a much reduced site used for camping and caravanning. As Sawyer points out, this is not a unique occurrence – sporting and camping interests, among others, have led to similar loss of land from other Victorian public gardens.

The gardens' history draws together some of the most well known figures in Victorian botanical history. William Guilfoyle took an interest. Ferdinand von Mueller recommended plants for the gardens and provided them, as did Geelong's first curator, Daniel Bunce.

Despite 20th century government reports strongly recommending conservation and restoration of the Queenscliff park and gardens, and heritage studies urging the investigation of original plantings and removal of the caravan park, there are now few traces left of the gardens. Their disappearance makes this book all the more necessary, but the book is also a plea for change: for commitment to the partial or total restoration of the gardens.

Recommended, and see also the author's article 'Queenscliff Botanic Gardens – born in hope, died of neglect' (*Australian Garden History* vol 31 no 2, October 2019).



Page 32 The Raddenberry fernery of the Geelong Botanic Gardens.

Left 1912 postcard of the gardens, 'Public Gardens, Queenscliff'. State Library of Victoria H82.96/146

Dialogue

Evidence of NZ gardening from earliest times

The latest archaeological excavation at Mangahawea Bay in Northland's Bay of Islands has reinforced the site's significance as a place that was continually settled and gardened from the 1300s to the late 19th century.

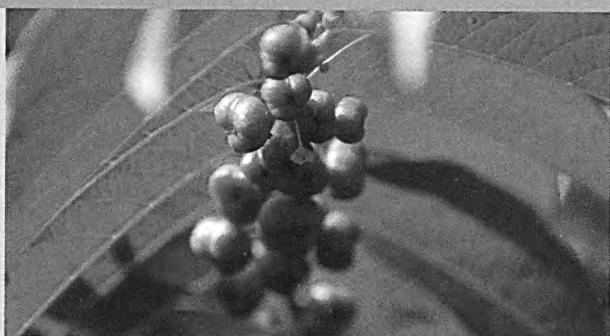
Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga senior archaeologist and excavation director Dr James Robinson says that the January 2020 excavation provides evidence of continuous occupation and cultivation from the time of earliest Polynesian settlers through to Māori and European occupation.

The excavation uncovered evidence of possible taro cultivation by the earliest arrivals, later kumara cultivation and extensive historic gardens thought to be associated with white potato cultivation, which began in the early 1800s. White potatoes emerged as a highly sought-after commodity by Māori in the Bay of Islands who traded them with Europeans for muskets and other goods in the period from 1818 to 1830.



Archaeologists working at the excavated pits at Mangahawea Bay. photo Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga

Exhibitions and conferences



The tree *Phyllanthus juglandifolius* can be seen in Brisbane Botanic Gardens, Mt Coot-tha. photo David J Stang. Wikimedia Commons

Banks and Solander, May 2020

The conference 'Banks and Solander: celebrating 200 years of botanical friends' will be held in May 2020. It marks the botanical wonders shown to European eyes after the 18th century voyage. The conference is being held by the Friends of Brisbane Botanic Gardens and Sherwood Arboretum. Open to the public, it will be at the Botanical Art Society of Queensland's exhibition 'Banks and Solander'.

All three of Brisbane's botanic gardens – the City Botanic Garden, Brisbane Botanic Gardens (Mt Coot-tha) and Sherwood Arboretum – will host parts of the conference.

date 22–25 May 2020

location City Botanic Garden, Brisbane Botanic Gardens Mt Coot-tha, and Sherwood Arboretum

Please check exhibition and conference details with organisers before making plans.

Flowers: Passion. Pain. Nation.

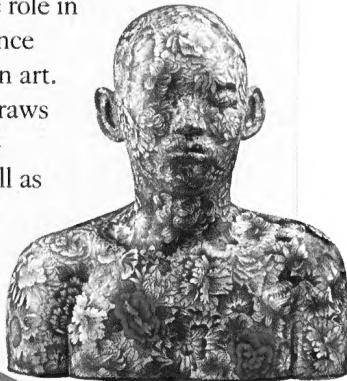
Flowers play a significant symbolic role in Western art from the late Renaissance through to contemporary Australian art. 'Flowers: Passion. Pain. Nation.' draws together the big narratives of life – religion, marriage and death, as well as love and eroticism. Artists include Hans Memling, Bartolomeo Passerotti, Sir Peter Cotes, Tom Roberts, Hans Gessner, Margaret Preston, Alice Neel, Arthur Boyd, Max Dupain, Platten, Ah Xian and Michael Zavros.

date until 2 May 2020

(Tuesday to Saturday 10 am – 4 pm)

location David Roche Foundation House Museum, 241 Melbourne St, North Adelaide

(\$10 adults, \$8 concession)



Ah Xian (China/Australia, born 1960), Jingdong Cloisonné Factory, China, Human human cloisonné bust, 2001, Dachang County, Hebei Province, cloisonné enamel on copper, 45 x 42.5 x 25.5 cm, Gift of ETSA Utilities and the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2006. Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide © courtesy the artist, 20063S1

POSTPONEMENTS

Readers might like to have the new dates for the Australian Landscape Conference in Melbourne – it has been rescheduled from March 2020 to 19–22 March 2021.

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AGHS members can download all journal issues free (and can receive discounts on purchases) by applying the code **member7694** at the checkout.

Getting to know them

stories from the AGHS national oral history collection

Chris Betteridge

Chris Betteridge was the original landscape and environmental specialist in the Heritage and Conservation Branch of the Planning and Environment Commission of NSW in 1978. After 10 years he joined the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney and then went into private practice in 1991. He has a strong interest in the protection of historic gardens and cultural landscapes generally.

These extracts come from an interview by Roslyn Burge with Chris for AGHS's national oral history collection on 20 March 2007 in his office in Sydney.

Chris Betteridge

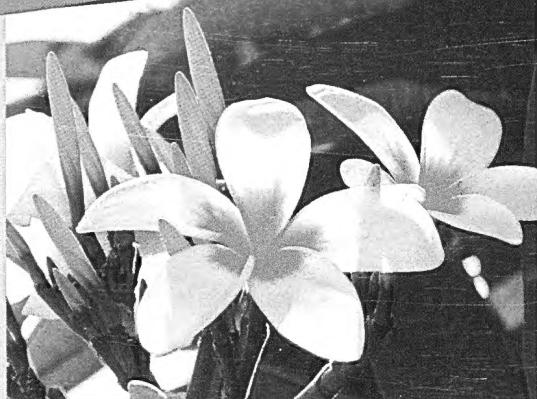
In the early 1950s my parents bought a property up at Blackheath in the Blue Mountains and engaged Paul Sorensen, a Danish landscape designer, to design the garden. My mother worked with Paul on the layout and plant selection. It wasn't one of his major commissions but he certainly designed the back part of the garden and around the house. Some of my earliest memories are of going with my parents to Sorensen's Nursery at Leura.

At the end of 1977 I went to work for National Parks and Wildlife Service. I had a fantastic year and would probably still be there if they hadn't established the Heritage Council of NSW. I was very lucky to be selected as the landscape specialist in the original team that was set up to service the Heritage Council in 1978... I ended up looking after all those sort of things that fell between the natural and the historic cultural environment.

Roslyn Burge You were speaking about the wider public not always understanding the Heritage Act at that time. Do you think there has been a move?

I think that all levels of government have worked to educate the public to appreciate cultural heritage and natural heritage... Elizabeth Farm is a very good example of how a government agency, the Historic Houses Trust, has done a wonderful job in interpreting that house and presenting it to the public and recreating the garden.

Thanks to interviewer Roslyn Burge and others from AGHS's national oral history program, this is available as a full transcript and recording (with many other interviews) at gardenhistorysociety.org.au/publications/.



And your frangipanis?

My wife and I have always loved frangipanis. I have always wanted to grow the evergreen white frangipani, *Plumeria obtusa*. We were up in Broome and Darwin late last year and they were all in full bloom and looked absolutely magnificent. So I brought two back from the Sunshine Coast and I'm trying to keep those going. We've tried to build up a collection of other varieties, everything from deep pinks through to pure white.

Are you a member of the Society?

Yes I was a foundation member. I was at that first Garden History Conference in 1980 in Melbourne. It was a very exciting conference, there were like-minded people from all over Australia attending and that was the genesis of the Society.

You spoke about strong interest from Victorians and Tasmanians. Why should that be?

There were people like Dame Elisabeth Murdoch and Sue Ebury who were influential in the early days of the Society. A lot of them were the owners of gardens and were passionate about their gardens and wanted to see them conserved. At the same time, like all gardeners, they wanted to have a certain amount of freedom to develop the gardens the way they wished. I guess that is one of the difficult things about gardens – they are dynamic growing things and you do have to allow each owner some latitude, you can't always freeze something in time. It depends really, like any heritage item, on what is the significance, and working with owners to strike a balance between conserving what is significant and allowing fresh expression of new ideas. We are going to have to deal with that a lot more in the future with global warming and increasing droughts, and perhaps rethink the sort of things that we plant in historic gardens.

photos 雞蛋花 Flickr (left) and Chris Betteridge (right)



The Australian Garden History Society promotes awareness and conservation of significant gardens and cultural landscapes through engagement, research, advocacy and activities.